

Job Sheet for Native Warm Season Grass Establishment As Wildlife Habitat

(645)

Purpose

Native Warm Season Grasses (NWSG) provide habitat diversity for game and non-game wildlife species. Because these are bunch grasses, they can be managed to provide open space at the ground level, spreading upright, and forming a canopy overhead, which is important to ground nesting birds. NWSG's also benefit larger game species by providing favorable conditions for a diversity of plants including legumes over sod-forming introduced warm season and cool season grasses.

Requirements

- * An establishment of NWSG requires prior planning and attention to details at planting time.
- * Seedbed will be prepared by any method that will result in a clean, firm seedbed without excessive weedy competition.
- * Soil test pH should be above 5.5.
- * Nitrogen is not recommended at planting due to promotion of undesirable plant competition.
- * Phosphate and/or potash can be added at planting.
- * Elimination of existing sod-forming grasses is critical.
- * Use of a herbicide (i.e. Roundup) is recommended for control of Bermuda and Bahia and other introduced warm season species.
- * Plateau—Roundup is effective on fescue.
- * Plant mid-March through June.
- * Drilling is the preferred method but seed can be broadcast. Several of the NWSG's have fluffy seed if de-bearded seed cannot be secure. Cyclone spreader or drop seeder can be used if Native Grass drills are not available.
- * Planting depth is $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.
- * Weeds must be controlled by mowing or spraying. Mow when weeds are approximately 18" tall, but mow no lower than 6" to prevent damage to seedlings.

Suggested Planting

Mixtures of several NWSG species are recommended. Combinations of Switchgrass, Indiangrass, Little Bluestem, Big Bluestem, Eastern Gamma Grass, and Coastal Panic Grass.

Example: 2lbs. Pure Live Seed (PLS) Switchgrass, 2lbs. PLS Little Bluestem, 2lbs. PLS Big Bluestem, 2lbs. PLS India Grass.



Native Warm Season Grass Establishment

Maintenance

- r Allow 2-3 years for grasses to become well established.
- r Begin a schedule of burning or mowing after stand is established.
- r Perform maintenance between February 1 – April 15.

Primary Habitat Considerations

- r Nesting and brood-rearing habitat for ground nesting birds
- r Natural food and cover source for doves, rabbits, deer, turkeys, quail, and various song-birds.

Site Specific Comments and Recommendations:

USDA-NRCS South Carolina

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